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ARTICLES

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PERESTROIKA'S REVIVAL OF NEP: A CONTEMPORARY CHRONICLE, 1985-1990

A NOTE OF EXPLANATION

In 1987, a group of former students of Robert Tucker held a conference in Princeton, New Jersey, devoted to various aspects of the *perestroika* reforms. This conference, organized by Stephen Cohen and Michael Kraus, seemed an appropriate way to honor one of the few scholars in the Soviet field who, far from being flummoxed by *perestroika*, had long brought to our attention both the need and potential for reform in the Soviet Union.

My report at this conference was on the topic of the reformers' use of NEP as a legitimating symbol. The NEP theme proved to be an extremely rich guide to the debates swirling in the Soviet media that were such a hallmark of the Gorbachev years. Public opinion mutated at high speed during *perestroika*, and so, with a view to publication, my report was substantially updated at least twice (whence the use of "chronicle" in the title). The final revision was made in the summer of 1990. At that point, events overtook us. As the Soviet Union crumbled and fell, the publication of a volume devoted to the problems of *perestroika* was no longer viable.

Enough time has now passed, however, to allow an out-of-date study of *current* events to turn into a useful study of a fascinating *historical* episode. Part of the historical value of my essay comes precisely from its time-bound perspective, so I have left it substantially unchanged from its 1990 rewrite. At that time, I added a final section entitled "The Waning of NEP." By tracking the use of NEP as a rhetorical theme, I was able to sense what, in hindsight, was the waning of *perestroika* itself.

I am happy to publish this article in *The NEP Era*, since *perestroika*'s revival was undoubtedly the most important episode in the afterlife of NEP. I also hope my article evokes the atmosphere of the Gorbachev years, a transitory, swift-changing and passionate period in Soviet history

that is too easily overlooked today.[1] As before, "*Perestroika*'s Revival of NEP" is dedicated to my teacher and friend, Robert C. Tucker.

> "Lenin said NEP was meant seriously and for a long time, but he never said it would last forever."
>
> Joseph Stalin, December 1929

> "We must build and renovate socialism. We must advance our society by relying on and using all the sap that comes to us from roots that go deep into our history, especially into socialist history, and by chopping off everything negative that comes from the 1930s and 1940s and from the recent stagnant period."
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> Mikhail Gorbachev, February 1988

As the year 1920 came to a close, Soviet Russia was near the end of a long slide into economic and social disaster. Since Russia's entry into the world war in 1914, the country had known invasion and intervention, bitter class and national conflict, desperate improvisation by political leaders, and rapidly accelerating economic disintegration. The end of the civil war had not brought the relief everyone had hoped for. With no food for the workers or fuel for the machines, urban life almost ground to a halt. The cities felt compelled to take what they needed from the peasants by force; the peasants responded with a wave of revolts that threatened the existence of the new Bolshevik state authority.

At the last moment the Bolsheviks found a way out of this deadlocked situation by rethinking a basic policy toward the peasants. The party had previously assumed that if free trade in grain were allowed, state grain collection would be impossible and the urban workers would starve. The peasants were therefore told to deliver to the state all the grain they normally would have marketed; the state promised goods in return but could not keep this promise. In one of his last great acts of leadership, Lenin convinced the Bolsheviks to allow the peasants to freely sell their grain after they had fulfilled the demands of the state grain collection. This policy was called "the food-supply tax" and it enabled the Bolsheviks and

1. See the recent discussion of the "historical amnesia" about *perestroika* in Stephen Cohen, *Soviet Fates and Lost Alternatives: From Stalinism to the New Cold War* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2009).

the cities to get sufficient grain without driving the peasants to desperation.[2]

The food-supply tax was the most dramatic of many new economic policies that became widespread in 1921 and the years that followed. The policies were rapidly seen as a unity-the New Economic Policy (NEP) – that promised to provide not only a response to the crisis of 1920 but also a long-term strategy for constructing socialism. The essence of this strategy was to involve the peasants in their own transformation through appeals to material interest and through direct demonstration of the practical advantages of socialism. But today's Soviet Union was not destined to be built by the logic of NEP. 1929 became what Stalin called the year of the great breakthrough – a breakthrough to forced-pace industrialization in the cities and coercive collectivization in the countryside. Stalin's Soviet Union went on to its own disasters and triumphs, and the era of NEP seemed to recede into historical irrelevance.

In 1985 the society built during the Stalin era began to face up to the dimensions of the impasse to which it had been led by Stalin's methods. For those searching for a path out of the crisis, NEP suddenly seemed irrelevant no longer. At the 27th Party Congress in February 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev went back to the origins of NEP and called for a creative use of the food-supply tax as a guiding principle of reform. Later that year the official journal *Kommunist* called for renewed attention to Lenin's writings of the NEP period. The prominent reform journalist Fedor Burlatsky wrote a series of long articles in *Literaturnaia gazeta* that provided a detailed, point-by-point comparison between NEP as conceived by Lenin and the aims of the new reform movement.[3]

This is not the first time the meaning of NEP has been at the center of political debate. Lenin's own approach to NEP evolved considerably; his last word on the subject-five articles published in early 1923 and described by Gorbachev as "a revolution within the revolution, no less profound, perhaps, than October," is regarded today as almost a charter for

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2. "Food-supply tax" is a more accurate translation of *prodnalog* than the usual "tax-in-kind." For full discussion, see Lih, "Bolshevik *Razverstka* and War Communism," *Slavic Review* 45 (1986): 673-88, and *Bread and Authority in Russia, 1914-1921* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990).

3. *Kommunist*, no. 12 (1986), pp. 9-10; see also *ibid*., no. 7 (1987), p. 63); Fedor Burlatsky, articles in *Literaturnaia gazeta,* April 16, 1986; Oct. 1, 1986; July 22, 1987. Burlatsky had already made comparisons to NEP in an article in *Voprosy filosofii*, no. 6 (1984), pp. 23-39. For other early articles, see Evgeny Ambartsumov, "Analiz V. I. Leninym prichin krizisa 1921 g. i putei vykhoda iz nego," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 4 (1984), and the reply by E. Bugaev, "Strannaia pozitsiia," *Kommunist*, no. 14 (1984), pp. 119-26; see also "Iskusstvo tochnogo rascheta," A. Kolesnichenko, *Pravda,* Oct. 28, 1986.

perestroika. After Lenin's death in 1924, the struggle within Bolshevism was in many ways a struggle over the meaning of NEP. Was NEP a retreat, a necessary compromise with the "petty-bourgeois" peasantry, a "path to socialism," or some combination of all three? According to Stalin, the retreat involved in the introduction of NEP had been made for the sake of a new offensive. He therefore claimed that his "offensive along the whole front" in 1929 – which resulted in collectivization in the countryside and elimination of the private and cooperative sector in the towns – was thoroughly consistent with NEP.[4] Stalin's famous *Short Course* of party history published in the late 1930s dismissed his opponents with these words: "Since the oppositionists were poor Marxists and complete ignoramuses in questions of Bolshevik policy, they understood neither the essence of NEP nor the character of the retreat undertaken at the beginning of NEP."

In actuality, Stalin's opponents – especially Nikolai Bukharin and Alexei Rykov – had never denied the necessity of an economic offensive, in other words, an accelerating socialist transformation of the economy and especially of the countryside. The dispute was over methods: when Stalin switched from the gradualist use of material incentives to a coercive "revolution from above," he had in effect repudiated NEP. While Stalin claimed he had brought NEP to a triumphal conclusion with the construction of a socialist economy in the 1930s, his opponents argued that he had deliberately killed it in the late twenties.[5]

Stalin's version was orthodoxy until very recently, and within its framework NEP was treated with great respect: "Only a few examples can be found in history of any important political undertaking that justified itself so completely and thoroughly, had such an immediate effect

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4. *Istoriia VKP(b) (kratkii kurs)* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1938), p. 245. For Gorbachev on Lenin's last articles, see *Pravda,* April 21, 1990, "Oktiabr i perestroika: revoliutsiia prodolzhaetsia," *Kommunist*, no. 17 (1987), p. 9, and *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), pp. 25-26.

5. A party resolution from 1925 called for "an economic offensive of the proletariat on the basis of NEP." Cited in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 12 (1968), p. 85. On the political struggles of the 1920s, see Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary: A Study in History and Personality* (New York: Norton, 1973), and Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938* (New York: Norton, 1971. The question of dating the end of NEP is one part of an extensive discussion of historical periodization in preparation for a new textbook of party history. Contributions to this debate can be found in *Kommunist*, no. 12 (1987), pp. 66-79, and Maksim Kim, *Voprosy istorii*, no. 6 (1988), pp. 115-30, as well as issues of *Voprosy istorii KPSS* starting with no. 6 (1987).

and such a long- term historical role as the transition to NEP."[6] According to Soviet scholars, NEP was a necessary phase in the development of any and all socialist revolutions. After the Second World War, a NEP phase became mandatory for the popular democracies in Eastern Europe, and Soviet specialists often advised third world countries to use NEP methods. But one reason for all these compliments was to neutralize NEP as a critical alternative to the Stalin model. NEP was a pre-socialist phase that the Soviet Union had passed long ago; any of its valuable features had already been incorporated into Soviet institutions.[7]

Occasionally slogans from NEP found their way into official rhetoric. During the most ambitious attempt before *perestroika* to deal with Stalin's economic heritage – the reform measures of the 1960s – the NEP experience was used to strengthen the call for expanded market relations. Beyond official rhetoric, one scholar's careful reading of Soviet economic literature revealed "undercurrents' that harked back to Nikolai Bukharin and his defense of NEP against Stalin.[8] Most of the themes of today's reform thinking were present during the post-Stalin period; the major difference is that today the anti-Stalinist implications of NEP are no longer an undercurrent – they have come forcefully to the surface.

The most striking manifestation of this change is the rehabilitation of Bukharin, not just as an innocent man unjustly accused by Stalin, but as the principal spokesman for the NEP alternative. In 1982, a popular book could be written on NEP that did not so much as mention him.[9] He was still, if not a criminal spy, then a "right deviationist"; now he is a martyr for the ideals of the revolution. By 1988, one Soviet writer described the conflict between him and Stalin as the conflict between good and evil, between life and death, between Christ and Satan.[10] The widespread interest

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6. Iu. A. Poliakov, V. P. Dmitrenko, N. V. Shcherban', *Novaia ekonomicheskaia politika: razrabotka i osushchestvlenie* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1982), p. 236.

7. *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, 1st ed. (1939) and 2nd ed. (1954), entries on New Economic Policy; I. V. Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972), pp. 12-13. For a statement by Imre Nagy on NEP as applied to Hungary, see Nicolas Spulber, *Organizational Alternatives in Soviet-type Economies* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 130-35, and for an application to Nicaragua, see Sergei Mikoian, *Latinskaia Amerika*, no. 3 (1980), pp. 34-44. See also Zenovia A. Sochor, "NEP Rediscovered: Current Soviet Interest in Alternative Strategies of Development," *Soviet Union*, 9, part 2 (1982): 189-211.

8. Moshe Lewin, *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates: From Bukharin to the Modern Reformers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979), especially chapter 12. Lewin's book is essential background for understanding today's debates.

9. Poliakov *et al*., *Novaia ekonomicheskaia politika*.

10. As cited by Mikhail Antonov, *Nash sovremennik*, no. 2 (1989), pp. 125-50.

in Bukharin has led to a Soviet edition of the biography written by Stephen Cohen. While almost all of the defendants of the show trials of the 1930s have been legally rehabilitated, only Bukharin and other prominent defenders of NEP such as Rykov have received extensive and sympathetic coverage in articles, documentaries, and even exhibitions. In the 1930s, Stalin was called "Lenin today' – the reformers wanted to make Bukharin "Lenin today."[11]

Today's revival of the 1920s has many aspects; the period has been praised for its art and literature, its legal institutions, and even its statistics."[12] In many ways, the return to NEP is a recovery of a rich but forgotten cultural heritage. For Gorbachev and the reformers, it shows that there are alternatives to Stalin's socialism that are rooted in Soviet history; Gorbachev can therefore claim that he is no revolutionary trying to tear down the fundamental structure of the system, but a reformer calling on Soviet society's own unrealized ideals."[13]

"Socialist Property Needs Its Owner": NEP and the Meaning of Socialism

NEP can be used an alternative model to Stalinism only insofar as it had Lenin's blessing. Gorbachev and the reformers have concentrated on two symbols of Lenin's association with NEP the new food-supply system that inaugurated NEP in 1921, and the short article "On Cooperation" that he wrote in 1923 on the eve of his final debilitating stroke.

At first glance, the food-supply tax seems an inappropriate symbol for *perestroika*, since it was an extremely heavy burden imposed on the peasantry in a time of famine and economic disorganization. Lenin himself said in 1921 that the tax was the aspect of the new policy that represented the crushing heritage of the past. A tax paid in kind rather than in money

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11. Two indications of the Bukharin revival: a Komsomol political club named after him, and Evgeny Evtushenko's poem dedicated to Bukharin's widow (*Izvestiia*, March 26, 1988). For background, see Stephen F. Cohen, "Bukharin, NEP, and the Idea of an Alternative to Stalinism," in *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History since 1917* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), pp. 71-92. On manifestations of the current revival, see Julia Wishnevsky, "Bukharin's Legacy in the USSR Today," *Radio Liberty Research Bulletin,* 3 16 (1988).

12. Many major literary works (for example, Evgeny Zamiatin's *We*) and artists (for example, Pavel Filionov) of the 1920s are being rediscovered. On legality, see Iurii Feofanov's somewhat unconvincing tribute to N. V. Krylenko in *Pravda,* Aug. 11, 1987; on statistics, see Vasily Seliunin and Grigorii Khanin, "Lukavaia tsifra," *Novyi mir*, no. 2 (1987), pp. 181-201.

13. On the distinction between revolutionary leadership and reform leadership, see Robert C. Tucker, *Politics as Leadership* (Columbia, MO: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1981).

also seems a strange rallying cry for economic reforms that reject the command economy in favor of a money-based market system.

Why, then, was the food-supply tax adopted as a symbol of the liberating heritage of NEP? The answer lies in the other half of the new policy, namely, the legalization of the free market in grain. The Bolsheviks were understandably reluctant to make the market a prime symbol of their policy, and so the tax itself came to be used as the label of the new hands-off policy of the state. Under the system symbolized by the food-supply tax, the state said to economic producers: do what you want in whatever way you want to do it-as long as the state gets what it needs, it will let you alone. In 1921, this message was given to pre-socialist peasant producers. Today Gorbachev wants to send the same message – in his words, "the possibility of ending the enserfment of constructive energy" – to collective fans and state industrial enterprises."[14]

Gorbachev also uses the introduction of the food-supply tax to show that he is not the only Soviet leader who proclaimed a drastic change of orientation and then had to convince many skeptics within the party about the socialist credentials of the new course. A centerpiece of Lenin's defense of his new course is the article "On Cooperation," viewed by today's reformers as the key Lenin text, far outstripping *What Is To Be Done?*, *State and Revolution*, and other works more familiar in the West. The article was written by a sick man who had evident difficulty expressing his thoughts, but the basic message is clear: the peasants must be led to socialism by appealing to their material interest, and cooperatives are an adequate means of bridging the gap between the interests of the peasant and the interest of society as a whole. In his oft-cited words: "Given social ownership of the means of production, given the class victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, the system of civilized cooperators is the system of socialism.[15]

The food-supply tax and "On Cooperation" are complementary symbols of NEP today. The food-supply tax symbolizes the hopes that the liberated energy of material self-interest will revitalize the Soviet economy. "On Cooperation" is interpreted today as a call for a diversity of eco-

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14. "Oktiabr i perestroika: revoliutsiia prodolzhaetsia," *Kommunist*, no. 17 (1987), p. 8. Gorbachev's term *raskreposhchenie* was used in 1921 as well.

15. "On Cooperatives" and Lenin's other final articles can be found in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Lenin Anthology* (New York: Norton, 1975), pp. 701-48. The scholarly consensus is that the last articles represent a break with Lenin's past thought; for a different reading, see Lars T. Lih, "Political Testament: Lenin, Bukharin and the Meaning of NEP**,"** paper presented to the conference on NEP, Moscow, October 1989 [published in *Slavic Review*, 50, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 241-52].

nomic forms based on initiative from below. This is in contrast to the past, when NEP was praised as a way of overcoming the heterogeneity of economic forms in pre- socialist Russia by creating a completely socialist society. This diversity of economic forms – in Gorbachev's words, "a mechanism for the realization of the whole spectrum of the interests of working people" – is not meant to weaken the state but to strengthen it by restricting it to its essential tasks and giving it useful partners in the form of independent social organizations.

In trying to give this vision concrete substance in terms of today's challenges, the reformers have come right up against the problem of socialist ownership – or more precisely, the problem of the socialist owner. A Russian word that is central to this problem is *khoziain.* Although it can be translated as "owner, it has richer connotations than the English term. It is etymologically related to words meaning peasant farm (*khoziaistvo*), the economy as a whole (*narodnoe khoziaistvo,* or people's enterprise), and mistress of the house (*khoziaika*). The word conjures up images of a hardy, canny, industrious and self-reliant peasant owner who manages his property in worthy fashion. Under the centralized Stalinist system, the ultimate *khoziain* was Stalin himself, and in fact this was his nickname (usually translated as "the Boss") among those who worked directly under him.

The reformers' remedy for the cynical apathy inherited from the Brezhnev era is to create in each producer a feeling of being a genuine *khoziain*. As the reformist economist Gavriil Popov (later mayor of Moscow) put it in his campaign platform when running for the congress of People's Deputies: "Socialist property needs its owner [*khoziain*]."[16] The ideology of the *khoziain* is a socialist version of the image of the citizen who knows how to protect himself and contributes to society from a position of independence.

In the state sector of the economy, this ideology has given rise to the reform slogan "full *khozraschet*." This term is short for *khoziaistvennyi raschet* the usual translations – "economic accountability," "financial independence" – give only the palest reflection of what is meant by it. The technical meaning of *khozraschet* is indeed the budgetary independence of a state enterprise: it receives no subsidies and in turn has control over what it earns. But the depth of the hopes placed on *khozraschet* is better conveyed by a translation such as "owner's calculation." Under *khozraschet,* socialist producers will make economic decisions based on the calculations of a real owner who suffers from bad decisions and gains

16. *Moscow News*, no. 4 (1989).

from good ones. This will not only lead to better decisions but will give producers the feeling that they have a stake in the economy as a whole.

To understand the implications of *khozraschet,* we must grasp the double nature of the centralized economic system inherited from the Stalin era. On the one hand, basic economic decisions are made at the top and imposed on producers. This is the message of the label made popular by Gavriil Popov: "the Administrative System."[17] (In Russian, *administrirovanie* has connotations of ordering people around without regard for their interests.) But this familiar aspect of the system should not obscure the other side of the coin- the enormous pressure from below that results when all resources come from the center. The center is surrounded by a thousand outstretched hands: if over-centralized decision-making is a curse on the system, so is *izhdivenchestvo,* which can be translated as "dependence bordering on parasitism."

The task of *khozraschet* is to lift both these curses: the managers of local state enterprises are not subjected to direct orders and physical allocation of products, but they also cannot expect the central authorities to bail them out with subsidies. Their decisions will have to be based on market indicators such as prices and profits, and so *khozraschet* implies the expanded use of "money-commodity relations," a Marxist term for an independent market."[18] Gorbachev's wager on democracy within the factory also requires *khozraschet*. Without genuine enterprise independence, elections of managers will have a closer resemblance to an American high school choosing a powerless class president than a board of directors choosing a chief executive.

Advocates of full *khozraschet* and the expanded use of money-commodity relations look back to NEP as the golden age of "*khozraschet* socialism." The inventor of this term, Nikolai Shmelev, wrote in a famous article in the journal *Novy mir:* "The directive instead of the ruble has reigned too long in our economy. So long that we seem to have forgotten that there was a time, there really was a time, when the ruble reigned in our economy and not the directive – that is, common sense and not arbi-

17. Gavriil Popov, "S tochki zreniia ekonomista (o romane Aleksandra Beka 'Novoe naznachenie')," *Nauka i zhizn'*, no. 4 (1987), pp. 54 ff.

18. A. Malafeev, "Tovarno-denezhnye otnosheniia i perestroika khoziaistvennogo mekhanizma, *Komnunist*, no. 18 (1986), pp. 78-88; P. Belousov, "K istorii tovarno-denezhnykh otnoshenii v SSSR," *Voprosy ekonomiki*, no. 1 (1987), pp. 95-104; V. I. Manuilov, "Metodologiia leninskogo issledovaniia tovarno-denezhnykh otnoshenii v period stroitelstva sotsializma i sovremennost," *Voprosy filosofii*, no. 10 (1987), pp. 39-48.

trary schemes thought up in offices."[19] As Shmelev's words indicate, much of reform thinking can be described as a revolt of economics against politics. Shmelev has gone so far as to argue that "all that is economically ineffective is immoral, and all that is effective is moral."[20]

This statement goes too far for many Soviet citizens (and no doubt for many in the West): Shmelev has been attacked as a "proponent of nouveau-richeism who is unconcerned about the growing economic inequality in the country.[21] The economist Mikhail Antonov has made himself the spokesman of those who feel that to let the ruble reign is to dethrone morality. According to Antonov, Lenin did not intend NEP to be "an idyllic development of '*khozraschet* socialism'." Antonov strongly opposes the program of the present-day "heirs of Bukharin," which he fairly accurately identifies as the unhindered operation of money-commodity relations, the replacement of the collective farms by capitalist-style farmers, a substantial weakening of the foreign trade monopoly, and full freedom of action for foreign entrepreneurs.[22]

Khozraschet is far from being a new slogan; it is easy enough, for example, to find endorsements of it by Stalin himself.[23] The question today is rather whether *khozraschet* will be used as just another method of enforcing "plan discipline," or whether it will be used as a gateway to genuine independence of state enterprises. Outside the state sector, the reformers also want to see the emergence of a genuine *khoziain,* but in this case their hopes are placed on a revival of the cooperatives.

During the civil war, most Bolsheviks were hostile to the cooperative movement, primarily because cooperative activists were politically on the

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19. Nikolai Shmelev, "Avansy i dolgi," *Novyi mlr*, no. 6 (1987), pp. 142-58. An extended discussion of the NEP economic model can be found in Shmelev and Vladimir Popov, *Na perelome: ekonomicheskaia perestroika v SSSR* (Moscow: Novosti, 1989); an English translation is available as *The Turning Point: Revitalizing the Soviet Economy* (London: Tauris: 1989). For a discussion of the economic thought of the 1920s, see the debate over the report by V. Manevich, *Voprosy istorii*, no. 10 (1989), pp. 46-75.

20. *Moscow News*, no. 6 (1988), p. 10; see also Shmelev, *ibid.*, no. 47 (1988): "It's a kind of insanity! We haven't yet realized the simple truth that *the market is always right.*" For Shmelev's defense of his position, see Stephen Cohen and Katrina Vanden Heuvel, *Voices of Glasnost: Interviews with Gorbachev's Reformers* (New York: Norton, 1989), pp. 151-56.

21. Anatoly Saliutskii, *Literaturnaia Rossiia,* Dec. 23, 1989; English translation in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* (hereafter *CDSP*), 41, no. 8 (1989).

22. Mikhail Antonov, "Na perelome: razmyshleniia o nravstvennom smysle razvitiia ekonomiki i ekonomicheskoi nauki," *Moskva*, no. 3 (1988), pp. 3-26; *Nash sovremennik*, no. 2 (1989); *CDSP*, 41, no. 8 (1989).

23. For example, Stalin, *Economic Problems*, p. 19. See the discussion by M. I. Piskotin, *Sotsializm i gosudarstvennoe upravienie* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1984), ch. 2.

extreme right wing of the socialist camp. Lenin tried to combat this prejudice because of the practical usefulness of the cooperative organizations. In "On Cooperation," Lenin argued further that they could be used as a bridge from single-owner peasant forms to more advanced socialist forms.

During the 1920s, although the cooperatives had lost all political independence, they expanded their operations into many different fields. But mass collectivization in the early 1930s put a halt to this activity, even though Stalin claimed to be fulfilling "Lenin's cooperative plan. The collective farms (*kolkhoz*es) were indeed billed as agricultural production cooperatives, but all other forms of cooperatives – credit, marketing, consumer, craft – were eliminated or reduced to insignificance. The collective farms themselves quickly lost the distinguishing feature of a cooperative, namely, independent economic activity based on democratic self-government. Economic pressure from state demands and internal interference by the party reduced the *kolkhoz*'s freedom of activity to a minimum.

The essence of today's agricultural reforms is not only to restore this freedom of action to the collective farm but to turn it into a "cooperative of cooperatives" – in other words, put effective decision-making as close as possible to the peasant household. Through long-term leases of land to peasant families, the reformers are aiming at no less than "to revive the peasantry" and to change the peasant's status from a hired hand of a state-controlled enterprise to a genuine *khoziain*.[24]

The reformers claim that during NEP the Bolsheviks fully sympathized with the peasants' desire to become masters of their own land; only during the Stalin era were such aspirations rejected as petty-bourgeois individualism.[25] In reality, today's view of the peasant is a fundamental break with the Bolshevik heritage. No Bolshevik, no matter how sympathetic to the peasants' interests, doubted that the peasants had to be "remade" in the image of the urban proletariat, and to lose their petty-bourgeois property instincts. Much closer to today's outlook are the views of Petr Stolypin, the tsarist statesman who tried to break up the peasant commune in the years after the 1905 revolution on the assumption that a secure feeling of individual ownership was a necessary precondition of agricultural progress. Stolypin has always been anathema to the Russian revolutionary

24. Gelii Shmelev, *Moscow News*, no. 43 (1988).

25. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Pravda,* March 16, 1989; Gennadii Lisichkin, *Moscow News*, no. 45 (1988).

tradition; the Bolsheviks would have been shocked to discover that his views carry more weight today than their own.[26]

The image of the peasantry as a national resource rather than an emblem of backwardness is the main reason for the new-found prominence of Aleksandr Chayanov, the most important agrarian economist of the 1920s. Chayanov was one of the founders of a school of economists that looked on the peasant family farm as a unique and viable economic form, one that defied the framework of both "bourgeois" and Marxist economists. Although he was not a Bolshevik or even a Marxist, he played an important role in public discussion of the cooperative movement and agrarian policy throughout the 1920s. He was arrested in 1930 on trumped-up charges of counterrevolutionary activity. His further fate was unknown until recently; we now know that after working in internal exile as an agricultural official in Central Asia, he was re-arrested in 1937 and shot in 1939.[27]

Although Chayanov and his theories were quickly forgotten in the Soviet Union, his work became extremely influential in the West and in the developing countries. Soviet society had thus been denied a legitimate source of national pride. Like much of the reformist outlook, the Chayanov revival has its roots in the Brezhnev era; for almost two decades, we are told, a group of scholars has "collected and studied Chayanov's heritage."[28] When Chayanov and other non-party scholars such as Nikolai Kondratiev were posthumously cleared of all legal charges in the summer of 1987, agricultural economists were ready to present detailed expositions of Chayanov's views.

It is not Chayanov's examination of technical questions about the optimal size of cooperatives that accounts for his widespread popularity today, but the celebration of the peasant's double role as "owner-worker" [*khoziain-rabotnik*]. As the chairman of a collective farm who called for

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26. See the comparison between Stolypin and Bukharin in a debate between the liberal critic Benedikt Sarnov and the conservative critic Vadim Kozhinov in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, no. 13 (1989).

27. Vladimir Kabanov, "Aleksandr Vasilevich Chaianov," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 6 (1988), pp. 146-67; Nadezhda Figurovskaia, "K stoletiiu so dnia rozhdeniia A. V. Chaianova," *Voprosy ekonomiki*, no. 1 (1988), pp.52-62; V. Gavrichkin, "Aleksandr Chaianov – grazhdanin i uchenyi," *Izvestiia,* Jan. 19, 1988. See also the comment by Viktor Danilov in *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3 (1988), pp. 21-24.

28. "Posthumous Justice," *Moscow News*, no. 33 (1987), p. 12; B. Surganov in *Moscow News*, no. 7 (1988), p. 4. The major works in English are A. V. Chayanov, *The Theory of Peasant Economy,* eds. Daniel Thorner, Basile Kerblay and R. E. F. Smith (Homewood, IL: R. D. Irwin, 1966), and "Journey of my brother Alexei to the land of peasant utopia," in *The Russian Peasant, 1920 and 1984,* ed. R. E. F. Smith (London: Cass, 1977).

the exoneration of the kulaks put it: "We are just beginning to realize, as it was proved by our outstanding economist Chayanov, that independent farmers fully correspond to the development of socialism."[29] It has even been asserted that Lenin's article "On Cooperation" was inspired by Chayanov's writing.[30] In the 1920s, writers like Chayanov who wanted to combine the virtues of the peasant way of life with modern technology were scorned as "neo-populists." But today Gorbachev argues that "the objective is to revive and encourage the best features of the traditional peasant character."[31]

Perestroika's agricultural reforms enjoy wide support, but the same cannot be said about the cooperatives in the cities. The urban cooperatives are both *perestroika*'s greatest success and its greatest failure. They are a success because the cooperatives called into life by the reform legislation have genuinely changed the economic landscape in the Soviet Union and made a visible impact on the daily life of its citizens; they are a failure because the hostility they have engendered has weakened support for *perestroika* and given the old guard its most persuasive talking point.[32]

The cooperatives will determine which image of NEP will be uppermost in popular consciousness: the NEP where the liberated energy of economic independence leads to personal and social prosperity, or the one where disreputable "nepmen" (barely tolerated private entrepreneurs of the 1920s) flaunt their wealth while honest workers barely eke out a living. Cooperatives began playing a role in reform rhetoric in 1986, and in the fall of that year, "individual labor activity" – or more briefly, moonlighting – was given legislative protection.[33] In the spring of 1988, when a fully-worked out Law on Cooperatives was passed, Gorbachev claimed that the application of the ideas of the new law "will signify a new qualitative stage in the development not only of the cooperative movement,

29. *Moscow News*, no. 10 (1989).

30. Vladimir Bashmachnikov, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, no. 7 (1989), p. 11.

31. Gorbachev, "Potentsial kooperatsii – delu perestroiki," *Pravda,* March 24, 1988; English translation in *Moscow News*, no. 14 (1988), supplement.

32. The number of people working in cooperatives grew from 156 thousand to 1.4 million in the space of a year (*Izvestiia*, March 10, 1989). For a description of the impact of the cooperatives, see Robert Cullen, "Letter from Rostov-on-Don," *The New Yorker,* June 12, 1989, pp. 107 ff.

33. The text of the law can be found in *CDSP*, 38, no. 46 (1986): 6-8; see A. Iu. Kabalkin, "Zakon ob individualnoi trudovoi deiatelnost – vazhhnyi rychag osushchestvleniia sotsialno-ekonomicheskoi politiki," *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i pravo*, no. 3 (1987), pp. 12-21; Libor Roucek, "Private Enterprise in Soviet Political Debates," *Soviet Studies*, 40 (1988): 46-63.

but also of the whole of Soviet society."[34] The Law on the Cooperatives is one of the legislative milestones of perestroika; some have called it the best enactment of the reform period and others have called it a bad mistake.[35]

Later legislation regulating the cooperatives reflected the difficulties of assimilating independent economic enterprise into the command economy. In the summer of 1988, legislation proposing high taxation rates for cooperatives was announced, but – a sign of the times – it was withdrawn after a heated discussion in the Council of Ministers. Legislation on taxes only appeared the following year and even then the central government avoided difficult decisions by handing over the job of setting tax rates to local authorities. In 1989, the cooperatives ran into trouble with another child of *perestroika*, the new popularly elected legislature. The legislature provided a forum for the deep hostility to cooperatives, especially those involved in middleman activities. The government responded to this hostility by introducing restrictive legislation.[36]

Despite the legislative stops and starts, the cooperatives had been launched with a broad ideological justification based on NEP. In Gorbachev's 1988 speech introducing the Law on the Cooperatives, the cooperatives were used as a symbol of how much Soviet society lost by the termination of NEP: "As non-equivalent exchange began developing between the state sector and the cooperatives, as command-style methods of management came to be used more and more, as the democratic principles of society started losing ground, the very idea of cooperation began to be frowned upon. . . . The cooperatives could not exist without *khozraschet* and broad democracy."

Gorbachev belligerently refuted those who claimed that "cooperation is not a socialist form of management but a return to private enterprise." On the contrary, "cooperatives – a mass social movement of the working people in a society freed from exploitation and class antagonism – are by their nature fully in line with the goals of socialism." The cooperative movement is also "one of the more important levers for broadening the

34. Gorbachev, "Potentsial kooperatsii – delu perestroiki," *Pravda,* March 24, 1988.

35. The best: Boris Kurashvili, *Moscow News*, no. 12 (1989), p. 13. A mistake: Iurii Solovev, discussing his election defeat in spring 1989, *CDSP*, 41, no. 17 (1989).

36. For material on earlier legislation about the cooperatives, see *Moscow News*, no. 3 (1989); *CDSP*, 41, no. 1, p. 10 and 41, no. 6, p. 25 (1989); *Kooperatsiia i arenda: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, kn. 1 (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1989).

democratic process as a whole" – a model for state enterprises on their way to *khozraschet* and democratic self-management.[37]

The reformers' main hope is that the liberated activity of the new *khoziain* would infuse new energy into the economy and help the population shake off its passivity and its "leveling" instincts. Sometimes the reformers sound as if they have been briefed by the Small Business Administration:

It turns out that it is not only the [high prices] that are unacceptable, but the independence of the cooperator. In contrast to all others he is the master [*khoziain*] of his own affairs and to that extent free. By his very existence he presents a challenge to people's barracks psychology, their subordination and dependence. In other words, he "thrusts himself forward," he "must have more than the rest," and it is this frank, legalized nonconformity that is intolerable to the philistine.[38]

The cooperatives were also assigned an important role in the over-all strategy of *reform*. In the short run, the cooperatives were supposed to find hidden reserves and to provide the population with immediate improvements in the provisions of goods and services. In the long run, the small-scale services provided by the cooperatives will create an environment in which large-scale state enterprise can function properly. Soviet specialists have calculated that thirty-five to forty billion man-hours are wasted each year in lines for food, so that in effect "every seventh able-bodied person does not work, but is occupied in searching and acquiring

37. Gorbachev, "Potentsial kooperatsii"; see also *Perestroika,* pp. 95-96. For a full-scale presentation of this outlook, see the article by the noted agricultural expert G. I. Shmelev, "'Ne smet' komandovat,'," *Oktiabr*, no. 2 (1988), pp. 3-26; L. E. Fain, "Razvitie kooperativnoi formy sotsialisticheskoi sobstvennosti v SSSR," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 5 (1987). The debate on the socialist nature of cooperative property can already be seen, in somewhat muffled form, by comparing the conservative view in *Razvitoe sotsialisticheskoe obshchestvo: sushchnost, kriterii zrelosti, kritika revisionistskikh kontseptsii,* 2nd ed. (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1975), pp. 84-86, with *Razvitoi sotsializm: obshchee i spetsificheskoe v ego stroitelstve* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1980), pp. 110-13. See also the 1969 article "Chelovek, kooperatsiia, obshchestvo," reprinted in Gennadii Lisichkin, *Ternistyi put k izobiliiu* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1984). (Lisichkin is one of the few writers who could republish their articles from the 1970s without undue embarrassment.) The previously dominant view can be found in Richard Kosolapov's article in *Pravda,* March 3, 1983; today's view can be found in articles from *Voprosy ekonomiki* by T. Kuznetsova, no. 4 (1987), L. Nikiforov, no. 3 (1988), pp. 22-34), G. Gorlanov, no. 3 (1988), pp. 43-41, and V. Marianovskii, no. 5 (1988), pp. 92-101. See also the exchange of letters between Kosolapov and Anatoly Butenko in *Voprosy filosof ii*, no. 12 (1987), pp. 142-50.

38. Gennadii Batygin, "Vse, chto ne zapreshcheno. . . ," *Krokodil*, no. 17 (1988).

food products."[39] This stunning social inefficiency not only demoralizes the consumer but also undercuts the possibility of technically advanced production. In the words of Gavriil Popov:

> The future . . . will not be determined in private cafes or individual workshops. This future is tied to success in information science, computers, robotic technology, in the opening up of Siberia and the oceans. But in order for our worker or technician, engineer or manager, scientist or student to be able to eat a hot roll in the morning without trouble and to avoid running around the stores for hours in search of available goods or standing in lines at a repair shop – [in order that] hundreds of thousands of heads and hands be freed from imaginary work in countless offices and administrations – in order to strike a powerful blow at the underground economy that is corrupting our society – we need a flourishing individual sector.[40]

If a high-minded image of NEP inspired the reformers who summoned forth the new enterprises, the reality of the cooperatives helped reinforce another image. In popular literature and movies, NEP has long been portrayed as a sort of Roaring Twenties in which nepmen and other shady underworld figures loom large. According to rumor, a young man appalled by high prices at a new cooperative cafe picketed the cafe with a sign that said "Down with NEP!"[41]

The large income of many of the new cooperative members offends against several deep-seated Soviet values. There is a moral indignation against "unearned income" that is hard for a Westerner to understand. The official reformist line labels this attitude with the opprobrious term "leveling" and insists that if the money is honestly earned, then it is sheer malignant envy to begrudge it. But can one honestly earn money simply by buying low and selling high? For many Soviet citizens, it is perfectly legitimate if a farmer goes to town and sells his own potatoes. But if the farmer hires someone to deliver and sell the potatoes, it is "exploitation" of a worker for private profit. And if someone should buy the potatoes from the farmer and sell them for a profit in the city, it is "speculation." The roots of these cultural attitudes go deeper than Marxist propaganda.

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39. A. Nikonov, "Razvitie kooperatsii i reshenie prodovolstvennoi problemy," *Voprosy ekonomiki*, no. 2 (1988), pp. 3-11.

40. G. Popov, "Perestroika ekonomiki i individualnyi trud," *Nauka i zhizn'*, no. 9 (1987), pp. 2 ff.

41. *Izvestiia,* May 1, 1987, p. 3. In Nina Andreevna's famous anti-*perestroika* broadside, reformers in general were called "descendants of nepmen."

The hostility to speculation, for example, goes back to pre-revolutionary prejudices against middlemen shared by statesmen and peasants alike; it has been reinforced by the recurrent bouts with famine that made profiteering seem particularly ghoulish.

These attitudes are translated into pledges to use taxes to insure social justice, as well as into a good deal of official inquisitiveness about the percentage of earnings devoted to salaries as opposed to reinvestment. High cooperative incomes have also created morale problems for the state sector. "How come a steelworker earns less than a person who sells shashlik [a tasty kebab-type snack)?"[42] Economic managers complained about a talent drain from the state sector and about unfair tax privileges for the cooperatives.[43]

High incomes are all the more irritating to the population at large because they seem to be derived from the high prices that are making life miserable for everybody else. When the retail consumer market collapsed in the latter half of 1988, it seemed that the cooperatives were exploiting and perhaps even creating the maddening shortages. There was some foundation for this, since cooperatives were often forced to buy their raw materials at the same retail outlets as the population. Consumers were outraged when a cooperative cafe bought all the coffee in the stores and sold it back to the population at inflated prices – especially since the rigid command economy ensured that increased demand did not increase the supply of coffee.[44] The dream that the cooperatives would compete with the state to the benefit of the consumer was replaced by a more prosaic reality: the cooperatives were often used as a semi-legal way to raise state prices. Fully 80 percent of the cooperative cafeterias in Leningrad were merely substitutes for previously existing state outlets.[45]

The cooperatives are also associated in the public mind with a new explosion of organized crime. Before the cooperatives, it is said, the Soviet Union had no need of words like mafia, racketeering, and money laundering – even though protection rackets had actually grown up during the Brezhnev era when large-scale embezzlement and fraud made many state employees vulnerable. The cooperatives are not simply victims of organized thuggery; they have also become a home for ex-convicts and wheeler-dealers from the underground economy of yesteryear.[46]

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42. *Moscow News*, no. 22 (1988), p. 4.
43. *CDSP*, 39, no. 16 (1987): 8-9; *Moscow News*, no. 42 (1988).
44. *Ogonek*, no. 7 (1988), p. 4, letter from N. P. Mankov.
45. *CDSP,* 41, no. 6 (1989), pp. 4-5.
46. *Literaturnaia gazeta*, no. 2 (1989), p. 11.

All of the negative images of the cooperatives came together in the case of Vadim Tarasov, the "soviet millionaire" who headed the Tekhnika cooperative. Tarasov hit the headlines in early 1989 and seemed tailor-made for opponents of the cooperatives: he had made obscene profits simply by selling unused waste material abroad, spending the foreign currency on computers and selling the computers at home for inflated prices. Critics charged that Tarasov was not really selling waste, but rather valuable raw material, and that he protected himself by putting high bureaucrats on the cooperative's governing board. Tarasov was stoutly defended by reformist newspapers such as *Moscow News,* but even other cooperative businessmen felt that the Tarasov case was a public relations disaster.

In 1990, Tarasov was outdone by a major political scandal caused by the ANT cooperative that was accused of selling Soviet tanks to foreigners. The directors of the cooperative claimed that they were set up, since they had purchased tractors and were surprised to receive instead some out-of-date tanks. The resulting scandal involved major politicians such as Anatoly Sobchak and Nikolai Ryzhkov, who were accused of authorizing ANT's alleged machinations. The whole uproar became grist for the mill of Ivan Polozkov, the emerging leader of Russia's conservative communists.[47]

Thus the cooperatives, instead of smoothing the transition to the new economic system, have upset many people (especially women) and exacerbated tensions.[48] Conservative forces have not been slow to pick up the issue. An ideological platform has been put together: the activities of the cooperatives show the dangers of "group selfishness" and of egoistic actions that hurt the community. The cooperatives are unpatriotic as well, even to the extent of exporting tanks. The cooperatives should be seen as a manifestation of the "shadow economy: that rose to prominence during the era of stagnation. The new millionaires will use the money acquired by corrupt activities to buy up the factories after the reformers manage to privatize them and in this way dispossess the working class.[49] The anti-

47. "Antgate: Who Stands to Gain?," Boris Balkarei and Yuri Teplyakov, *Business in the USSR,* 1, no. 1 (May 1990), pp. 60-63. On the Tarasov case, see "Kooperatsiia i biurokratiia: kto kogo," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, no. 18 (1989).

48. See the polls in *Moscow News*, no. 4 (1989), and no. 3 (1988), p. 9; see also *Literaturnaia gazeta*, no. 13 (1989); "Eshche raz o kooperativakh," *Izvestiia*, Febr. 27, 1988; L. Belikanova and P. Degtiarev, "Kachestvo zhizni," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, March 9, 1988.

49. Anatoly Saliutskii, *Pravda,* Febr. 14, 1989 (translated in *CDSP*, 41, no. 6, 1989, p. 7). The paper *Literaturnaia Rossia* is a fertile source of a anti-cooperative articles. For a sober view of the topic, see S. D. Golovnin and A. N. Shoklin, "Tenevaia ekonomiia: za realizm otsenok," *Kommunist*, no. 1 (1990), pp. 51-58.

cooperative movement also has a solid class basis: the industrial workers, who are threatened both by the high prices of the cooperatives and the economic success of those who left jobs in the state sector. The most outspoken attack on the cooperatives at the Congress of People's Deputies in 1989 was from Viktor Shcherbakov, the head of the trade unions. Reformers noted grimly that the cooperatives were replacing the bureaucrats as the image of the enemy.[50]

Spokesmen for the cooperatives fought back as best they could. When the cooperatives first appeared, it was confidently claimed that competition would drive prices down. The rigidities of the system and the continued collapse of the consumer market made this prophecy sound less and less plausible. (One exception was flower vending, where the cooperatives have had the hoped-for positive impact.)[51] The cooperatives then pointed out the many difficulties that added to their production costs: problems in obtaining registration and in leasing space, discriminatory prices for raw materials, vulnerability to corrupt pressures. The state sector has managed to use its power to prevent any real competition between cooperatives and state enterprises; state economic managers made it clear that they wanted the cooperatives to do no more than "tighten up the nuts" for state industry. No steps have been taken to establish the promised wholesale market for raw materials, so that the cooperatives have been forced into competing with individual consumers for supplies. In this and other ways, the cooperatives feel that they have been set up as a scapegoat for the overall failure of the economy.[52]

Cooperative spokesmen admit that many of the new entrepreneurs have criminal records, but they ask in response: isn't it understandable that during the Brezhnev era of stagnation, many enterprising people ended up on the wrong side of the law? One association of cooperatives has even set up a program for helping young ex-convicts go straight.[53]

The top leadership no longer seemed anxious to associate the reform program too closely with the disreputable urban cooperatives, and so their fate became tied up with the progress of reform at local levels. Unreconstructed local authorities seemed to measure their performance by the number of cooperatives they closed; newly elected reform officials (such

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50. *Moscow News*, no. 12 (1989).

51. *Ibid.*, no. 45 (1988); no. 4 (1989) (Andrei Kuteinikov).

52. See Anatolii Rubinov, "Nepravednye dengi," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, no. 15 (1988); *Moscow News*, nos. 6, 10, and 43 (1988); *Literatunaia gazeta*, no. 15 (1987), pp. 10-11, 43.

53. V. Sorokin, head of the Union of Cooperatives, in *Pravda,* Febr. 4, 1989; (*CDSP*, 41, no. 5 [1989]: 24). See also Vladimir Iakovlev, head of Fakt, *Moscow News*, no. 47 (1988).

as the Moscow city council in 1990) promptly reversed many anti-cooperative restrictions. Under these circumstances, the cooperatives were forced to band together and organize in order to make their case to the public as well as to provide services needed by the fledgling cooperatives. In this way the cooperative movement is making an impact on the political system that matches its impact on the economic system, for we are witnessing the birth of openly conducted interest-group politics.

Thus the cooperatives are a source of creativity not only in the economic sphere but the political sphere. But they are also vulnerable to pressure in both spheres. Cooperatives in other socialist countries have not succeeded in breaking out of a vicious circle of vulnerability. The less respectable the cooperatives are, the less anyone reputable wants to become a cooperative businessman, and the more difficult it is to shake the nepman image.[54] Shortages pose another dilemma: if cooperatives are given economic independence in an environment of general shortage, they will be seen as speculators – but if their activities are restricted, they will be forced to the shady side of the law in order to obtain supplies. In either case, they will be pushed to a marginal economic and political position. The private sector managed to break out of this marginal position in Poland, but at the cost of an unholy alliance with a corrupt economic bureaucracy.[55]

All of these sources of vulnerability had their counterpart in the NEP-that-was and helped prepare its premature demise. The reformers are still hoping to activate the NEP-that-might-have-been: the cooperatives will help the whole economy by providing not only salutary competition, but also the work ethic of an industrious *khoziain*. But one lesson of the NEP-that-was is that independent cooperatives cannot survive in an atmosphere of economic crisis and political hostility, and so the future of the cooperatives depends on the overall health of the new NEP.

What connects all the aspects of the NEP alternative – *khozraschet* in industry, revival of the peasantry in the countryside, and urban cooperatives in daily life – is the wager on the new socialist *khoziain*. Gorbachev

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54. Iu. Kazantsev, "Kooperativ na starte," *Krokodil*, no. 5 (1989), p. 9. An article by a spokesman for the conservative United Workers Front ironically harked back to the 1920s as a time when criminal activities by cooperatives and nepmen were vigorously repressed (Aleksei Sergeev in *Nash sovremennik*, no. 4 [1990]).

55. Anders Aaslund, *Private Enterprise in Eastern Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985); "The Decay of Socialism and the Growth of Private Enterprise in Poland," *Soviet Studies,* 41, no. 2 (1989): 194-214. Aaslund's views of the cooperatives of *perestroika* can be found in *Gorbachev's Struggle for Economic Reform* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991).

has proposed a man named Anatoly Volochensky as a model *khoziain*. When Volochensky informed Gorbachev of his reasons for going over to agricultural rental contracts, he "emphasized the possibility of free and independent decision-making and of working and acting depending on the conditions, without having anyone order him about or interfere in his work. . . . There was no talk of profit or income, but just of a man finally seeing his potential as a farmer realized."[56]

"Which Road Leads to the Temple?": NEP and the Road to Socialism

The profound crisis of Soviet society has given rise to some very troubling questions. If the system requires radical restructuring, perhaps the original construction plan was a bad one. Perhaps the October Revolution and the triumph of the Bolsheviks was a tragedy for Russia. These devastating doubts are directly expressed in *Forward! Forward! Forward!*, a play published in 1988 by the path-breaking historical dramatist Mikhail Shatrov.[57] The cast of characters is made up of a striking range of Russian political activists who had some connection to the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917: non-Bolshevik revolutionaries, liberals, White Guard officers, as well as Bolshevik supporters and opponents of Stalin. Many of these characters have never appeared in Soviet political theater, or only in the stereotyped form described by one critic: "The Menshevik Martov, who slobbers and drops his pince-nez; the SR Spiridonova, who is flat-chested, hysterical, and carries a gun in her fur-muff; the lordly Plekhanov, terribly distant from the people; Trotsky, who is either selling out Mother Russia in mysterious ambassadorial residences or who flops him-

56. Gorbachev, "Potentsial kooperatsii."

57. Shatrov, "*Dal'she. . . dal'she. . , dal'she!*," *Znamia*, no. 1 (1988), pp. 3-53. For this and other of Shatrov's plays, see Mikhail Shatrov, *The Bolsheivks: Three Plays* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1990). For further discussion of Shatrov, see *Pravda*, Jan. 10, 1988 and Febr. 15, 1988; *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, Febr. 19, 1988; *Moscow News*, no. 24 (1987), no. p. 9 (discussion between Shatrov and Stephen Cohen), and no. 10 (1988), p. 12; *Znamia*, no. 5 (1988), pp. 219-36; *Oktiabr*, no. 5 (1988), pp. 201-03. Many of these documents can be found with a discussion by Jane Burbank in "The Shatrov Controversy," *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 28, no. 4 (Fall 1989): 580-603. It is characteristic of the Soviet debate that it focuses on literary works rather than works of historical scholarship. A conference was held April 27-28, 1988 on this topic: see "Istoriki i pisateli o literature i istorii," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 6 (1988), pp. 3-114. An English translation with an introduction by William Rosenberg can be found in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 28, no. 4 (Fall 1989): 549-79.

self down on the sofa with a French novel [at the height of the civil war]."[58]

Shatrov's play jumps forward and backward in time, and allows the characters to comment freely on events and to confront Lenin with the consequences of his decision to take power in 1917. The question is starkly presented: was the October revolution a mistake? Given the horrors of Stalinism, were Lenin's critics right to oppose him in 1917? Shatrov's answer is that Stalinism was a distortion and a betrayal of the revolution and that the genuine Bolshevik heritage was represented by NEP. But this response gives rise to a further question: if NEP represents an alternative to Stalinism, why was it rejected at the end of the 1920s? Was this rejection inevitable? Was it justifiable?

A Soviet writer has observed that "*perestroika* has made all of us historians." It is not simply an interest in the past that has led to self- scrutiny so intense that in 1988 all school examinations in history were cancelled. There is a widespread feeling that Soviet society has been travelling on a road leading to a dead end: in order to find its way, the society must go back to where the wrong turning was made. The fundamental question is "which path leads to the temple?" – the temple dedicated to the best ideals of the Soviet past.[59]

The historical fate of NEP is central to this search for the correct path. Despite the wide variety of competing answers in the Soviet newspapers and journals, three general approaches can be distinguished.

1. *The abolition of NEP was not inevitable, but justifiable*. In his pioneering critique of Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev did not shed any tears over the abandonment of NEP. "Violations of socialist legality" occurred only some years after the great breakthrough:

> Let us consider for a moment what would have happened if in 1928-29 the political line of the right deviation had prevailed among us. . . . We would not now have a powerful heavy industry, we would not have the *kolkhoz*es, we would find ourselves disarmed and weak in a capitalist encirclement. . . . It was precisely during the period of 1935-1937-1938 that the practice of mass repression through the state apparatus was born.[60]

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58. L. Ovrutskii, *Sovetskaia kultura,* Febr. 4, 1988.

59. The phrase comes from Igor Kliamkin, "Kakaia ulitsa vedet k khramu?," *Novyi mir*, no. 11 (1987), pp.150-88. The image of a road leading to a temple comes from the film *Repentance.*

60. The text of Khrushchev's 1956 speech on Stalin can be found in *Khrushchev Remembers*, ed. Strobe Talbott (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), pp. 560-618.

This Khrushchev-era critique is represented by Anatoly Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat,* a novel begun under Khrushchev but published only under Gorbachev. The heroes of the novel – the fictional Sasha Pankratov and the historical Sergei Kirov – are supporters of the "revolution from above" that destroyed NEP, and one of the principal negative characters (a pool shark named Kostya) is portrayed as an anachronistic nepman. The main drama of the novel comes from Stalin's degeneration and his descent into active criminality in 1934.[61]

In 1987, despite his favorable view of NEP, Gorbachev remained within the limits of Khrushchev's critique. In his speech on the seventieth anniversary of the revolution, Gorbachev stated that the abandonment of NEP led to bureaucratization and over-centralization, the end of *glasnost'* and democracy, and the peasant's loss of the status of a true *khoziain*. But Gorbachev still criticized Bukharin and other defenders of NEP for overlooking the life-and-death importance of time. The threat of imperialist aggression and the imperative of extremely rapid industrialization meant that collectivization was necessary despite the mistakes in its implementation.

Gorbachev has slowly but steadily moved away from even this conditional defense of the destruction of NEP. In a 1989 speech going over the same events, Gorbachev's condemnation was more stark: the destruction of NEP was "a serious strategic miscalculation and a deviation from Marxist views": it led to the famine of 1932-33, the crimes of dekulakization, and the "administrative-command system" of managing society as a whole. The denunciation of collectivization was balanced only by a mere nod in the direction of orthodoxy. Despite Gorbachev's studied vagueness on the objective and subjective causes of NEP's demise, he left no doubt that he no longer thought it was justifiable. On this issue, Gorbachev finally caught up with his supporters.

Gorbachev's interpretation of Lenin's testament also changed in accordance with his view of the priorities of the reform process. In 1990, when ethnic violence and economic crisis had led to increasing talk of civil war, Gorbachev saw Lenin's central message as the insistence on peaceful reform rather than violent confrontation.[62]

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61. Rybakov, *Deti Arbata* (Moscow: Knizhnaia palata, 1988); English translation (Boston: Little, Brown, 1988). There are a few pro-NEP passages in the novel, and these were picked up by Soviet reviewers; see A. Turkov in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, June 8, 1987.

62. "Oktiabr i perestroika," *Kommunist*, no. 17 (1987), pp. 9-15; *Perestroika*, pp. 39-40; *Pravda*, March 16, 1989. Gorbachev's critique of dekulakization was still limited to the "mistaken" repression against non-kulaks. For a scholarly article that follows Gorbachev's

2. *The abolition of NEP was neither inevitable nor justifiable*. The intelligentsia supporters of *perestroika* agree that the abolition of NEP was not inevitable and that real alternatives existed. But in their view the wrong alternative was chosen: the party took the wrong path, with tragic consequences for socialism and for Soviet society.

The basic postulate of this consensus is that the rejection of NEP was a rejection of Lenin's political testament. In 1987, Fedor Burlatsky published a one-act play entitled *Political Testament*. Burlatsky's play is set in the late 1920s and shows a peasant father and his two sons, one of whom is a Bukharinist and the other a Stalinist. The Bukharinist son tells his father that the issue between the brothers is "what will happen to NEP? Will it be prolonged, or rolled back? . . . At the end of 1922, the sick Lenin dictated five articles. [It is this testament] that we're arguing about.[63] It is clear the Burlatsky thinks that the Bukharinist son has much the stronger case. But as Burlatsky's parable of two brothers implies, the argument over Lenin's testament was a schism within Bolshevism. The reformers have to provide an explanation for this fatal misstep without seeming to condemn Bolshevism as a whole.

One way to solve this problem is to blame the leaders, rather than the party. Lenin's "Letter to the Congress" can be used for this purpose. (This letter by itself is sometimes also called Lenin's testament.) The letter was actually a series of notes dictated by Lenin in preparation for the party congress scheduled for spring 1923. In these notes, Lenin made damaging remarks about all the top Bolshevik leaders; in a postscript he proposed that Stalin be relieved of the post of general secretary. We now know that the contents of the letter quickly became known to the rest of the Politburo, but only after Lenin's death in 1924 were his suggestions made known to the wider party public.[64] Stalin duly offered his resignation, but he was urged to remain on the job by his fellow leaders, if only because they

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1987 line, see L. F. Morozov, "Leninskaia kontseptsiia kooperatsii i alternativy razvitiia," *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 6 (1988), pp. 101-55.

63. *Literaturnaia gazeta*, July 22, 1987. Burlatsky's title is taken from Bukharin's 1929 article "Lenin's Political Testament," first published in 1929 and reprinted in *Komniunist*, no. 2 (1988).

64. For the complicated circumstances surrounding Lenin's letter, see Robert Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary*; Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968); Robert H. McNeal, *Stalin: Man and Ruler* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), ch. 5. For the new information about the letters, see V. P. Naumov, "Leninskoe zaveshchanie," *Pravda*, Febr. 26 and March 25, 1988; V. I. Startsev, "Politicheskie rukovoditeli sovetskogo gosudarstva v 1922-nachale 1923 g.," *Istoriia SSSR*, no. 5 (1988), pp. 101-22; Egor Yakovlev, *Moscow News*, no. 4 (1989); Alexander Bek, *ibid.*, no. 17 (1989) (Bek wrote a novel on the subject).

needed his services in the fight against Trotsky. The existence of the letter was not secret during Stalin's time in power. The interested student could read in Stalin's collected works the following passage from a 1927 speech: "They say that in this 'testament,' comrade Lenin suggested to the Congress that in light of Stalin's 'crudeness,' it should consider the question of replacing Stalin as general secretary. This is completely correct."[65] The full text of the letter was finally published after Stalin's death.

It is only natural that once *perestroika* was under way, Lenin's letter would be endlessly discussed in the press, with an underlying message of "if only we had listened to Lenin." Many felt that the failure of the Bolshevik leaders – particularly Zinoviev and Kamenev – to carry out Lenin's wishes and insist on Stalin's removal was (in the words of Dmitri Kazutin of the *Moscow News)* "precisely apostasy."[66] This explanation relies on the Lenin cult to drive out the Stalin cult. One critic wrote that the argument seems to be that "Lenin is right, because he is Lenin; the will of Ily'ich [a familiar name for Lenin] is law that must be carried out; anyone who doesn't carry it out is an intriguer and a political hack."[67]

Another convenient scapegoat is Lev Trotsky, even though he was removed from all positions of influence long before the rejection of NEP. Trotsky is accused of starting a power struggle within the party because of his overweening ambition. This accusation draws strength from an anti-political attitude still current today that "the struggle for power is always unprincipled, since it is for oneself and not for principles and the truth."[68] Gorbachev lent his support to another popular theory that Trotsky was the originator of Stalin's policies of "super-industrialization" and exploitation of the peasantry. According to this theory, all Stalin did was "out-Trotsky Trotsky." This theory was seductive because it requires the smallest possible break with the previous orthodoxy that cast the Left

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65. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, t. 10 (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1954), pp. 172-77. An important article on the reception of the testament during the 1920s is S. Dmitrenko, "Leninskoe 'pismo k sezdu': pravda i vymysli," *Politicheskoe obrazovaniie*, no. 8 (1988), pp. 32-45.

66. *Moscow News*, no. 2 (1988), p. 12. For typical articles on the letter, see *ibid.*, no. 3 (1987), p. 13; Iu. Borisov, "Chelovek i simvol," *Nauka i zhizn'*, no. 9 (1987), pp. 62-64; "Leninskoe zaveshchanie," *Pravda,* Febr. 26 and March 25, 1988. For a more skeptical view, see Maxim Kim, *ibid.*, Febr. 2, 1988.

67. L. Ovrutskii, *Sovetskaia kul'tura,* Febr. 4, 1988.

68. M. P. Kapustin, "Ot kakogo nasledstva my otkazyvaemsia?," *Oktiabr*, no. 4 (1988), pp. 176-93, and no. 5, pp. 152-53. Kapustin calls Trotsky and Stalin "two bears from the same cave." At the 28th party congress in 1990, Aleksandr Yakovlev said that the tragedy of the party occurred when it turned from being a party of an idea to being a party of power (*Izvestiia*, July 3, 1990).

Opposition as a villainous faction. The condemnation of Trotsky also unites reformers with less liberal currents who see Trotsky as the "anti-national" evil genius of the revolution.[69]

To blame the top Bolshevik leaders for not getting rid of Stalin implies that the major reason for the degeneration of the revolution was Stalin's abuse of power. Social philosopher Anatoly Butenko has put this conclusion in the form of a thesis on Stalin's "usurpation of power": "relying on the cadres selected by him and creating an administrative-bureaucratic pyramid, [Stalin] secured unquestioned one-man rule." Thus the dictatorship of the proletariat ceased to exist, and the party as Lenin understood it was almost destroyed.[70] Butenko's usurpation formula expresses extreme moral revulsion from Stalinism as anti-socialist, while at the same time removing most of the blame from the Bolshevik party and the Soviet people. Despite its focus on Stalin as an individual, however, the usurpation explanation cannot avoid a wider question: why did the party allow it to take place?

This question has set the framework for the serious historical investigations of NEP that began to appear in 1988. Historians have argued over the reality of the economic crisis of the late 1920s that gave Stalin his excuse for destroying NEP. One influential interpretation argued that mistakes in policy had made a crisis in town-country relations all but inevitable by 1925. Stalin's solution to the crisis was to apply "emergency measures" on a permanent basis against kulak sabotage, as well as wreckers and class enemies of all descriptions. This solution found support because of a long-standing tendency toward "petty-bourgeois revolutionism" in the party.[71]

If the historians are correct that the Bukharinist alternative was genuinely rejected by the majority of the party, then explanations must go deeper than the mistakes of the leadership. In coming to grips with the party's tragic misstep, reformers most often look to the earlier period of

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69. For example, Apollon Kuzmin, "K kakomu khramu ishchem my dorogu?," *Nash Sovremennik*, no. 3 (1988), p. 158. The story of the gradual rehabilitation of Trotsky among the reformist intelligentsia would require a separate study.

70. *Moscow News*, no. 9 (1988), p. 12; see also no. 22, p. 12; *Sovetskaia kul'tura,* Febr. 4, 1988. For critical discussion of the usurpation formula, see "Nekotoryi problemy razvitia obshchestva v 70-e gody. Deistvie mekhanizma tormozheniia," *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 2 (1988), pp. 110-33.

71. G. Bordiugov and V. Kozlov, "Vremia trudnikh voprosov," *Pravda,* Sept. 30 and Oct. 10, 1988. The influence of this argument can be detected in Gorbachev's speech on March 15, 1989. For other discussions, see V. S. Leichuk and L. P. Kosheleva, "Industrializatsiia SSSR: vybor kursa," *Pravda,* Oct. 21, 1988 and the round-table discussion in *Voprosy istorii*, no. 9 (1988).

"War Communism." War Communism is the name usually given to the economic policies of the period 1918-1921; its hallmark was the extreme concentration of all available resources in order to win the civil war and prevent complete economic collapse, with a consequent inability to use material incentives. The official line has always been that War Communism was an enforced set of emergency measures that were abandoned when the emergency was over.

Most reformers, however, would agree with Roy Medvedev when he described Stalinism as "a more horrific version of War Communism." Medvedev argues that the Bolshevik leaders who introduced War Communism saw it as a regrettable but temporary necessity.[72] If this is so, then War Communism's destructive effect on many Bolsheviks was a tragic circumstance that casts no shadow on the heart of the Bolshevik enterprise. In the words of one of Shatrov's characters (the non-Bolshevik revolutionary Maria Spiridonova): "October was a pure stream; it was the civil war that muddied."[73] Matters are more serious if War Communism represented an alternative conception of socialism. The economist Vasily Seliunin has argued that Lenin resorted to terror during the civil war mainly because he was still in thrall to the utopianism of traditional socialism and did not understand that material incentives were needed to motivate producers. Seliunin is an insightful economic critic but not a very adequate historian; his article betrays very little feel for the civil war, a period in which material incentives were in extremely short supply.[74]

If Seliunin criticized the Lenin of War Communism, it was all for the greater glory of the Lenin of NEP. But the emphasis on NEP and the last articles has allowed many Soviet intellectuals to reject most of what Lenin stood for, while claiming that they are not rejecting Lenin himself, since "the evolution of Lenin's views graphically attests to his greatness and his political genius."[75]

It sometimes seems as if the concept of War Communism has expanded far beyond the civil-war policies of 1918-21 to include all the revolutionary fervor and the ideological commitment that today's reformers find so distasteful in the Soviet Union's founding fathers.[76] The conflict between War Communism and NEP then becomes a split within Bolshe-

72. *Moscow News*, no. 24 (1988), p. 12.

73. *Znamia*, no. 1 (1988), p. 34.

74. Seliunin, "Istoki," *Novyi mir*, no. 5 (1988), pp. 162-89.

75. Nikolai Portugalov, *Moscow News*, no. 8 (1989). For a protest against this sort of "vivisection" of Lenin into two Lenins, see "Tvorcheskaia energiia leninizma," *Kommunist*, no. 7 (1989), pp. 3-11.

76. Vladlen Sirotkin, "Uroki NEPa," *Izvestiia*, March 9 and 10, 1989.

vism itself, one that continues in different forms right up to today: Left and Right in the 1920s, Stalinist and Bukharinist in the 1930s, "dogmatists" and reformers in the 1960s, opponents and supporters of *perestroika* today.[77] The image of the two Bolshevisms struggling for the soul of the party is probably dominant today among those intellectuals who have not given up on Bolshevism altogether.

3. *The abolition of NEP was inevitable*. The reformist writers who see NEP as a viable alternative are all concerned to save the honor of the Bolshevik revolution, or at least the NEP wing of Bolshevism. There are many Soviet writers who do not feel any such loyalty to Bolshevism and who deny that NEP was a genuine alternative to Stalinism. Nationalists who detest intelligentsia reformers as much as they do Stalinism and Brezhnevism charge that intellectuals only turned away from Stalin in 1937 when the repression finally cut a wide swath in the educated classes.[78] As a consequence, the intelligentsia critique is not radical enough and ignores the larger social forces behind Stalin. If asked to give a concrete description of these large social forces, some writers in this camp will refer to shadowy world-wide conspiracies with a Judeo-Masonic tinge.[79] The poverty of their own explanations, however, does not exclude the possibility of insightful criticisms of the reformist version of events.

The principal spokesman for this trend, Vadim Kozhinov, has used Rybakov's novel *Children of the Arbat* as an example of how the intelligentsia critique trivializes the emergence of Stalinism by reducing it to an intrigue by a demented egomaniac and his unscrupulous hirelings. This type of explanation views the intellectuals only as victims and in particular does not question the pre-Stalin Bolshevik consensus of NEP. In a widely discussed series of articles, Aleksandr Tsipko argued that NEP did not bring about any change in the most damaging Bolshevik tenets: the demand for a total break with the past, the condescending attitude toward the peasant, the refusal to accept the constraints of the rule of law, and the denial of religious values.[80] Tsipko makes an exception for Bukharin, but Kozhinov and others feel that the current deification of Bukharin is a

77. See Iu. Apenchenko, "Nedodelannye dela: opyt oktiabria i puti perestroiki," *Znamia*, no. 11 (1987), pp. 166-80; Anatoly Strelianyi in *Moscow News*, no. 42 (1988); Vasilii Uzun, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, no. 11 (1989).

78. Kozhinov, "Pravda i istina," *Nash sovremennik*, no. 4 (1988), pp. 160-75.

79. See the discussion by Igor Vinogradov of Vasilii Belov's new novel in *Moscow News*, no. 18 (1989).

80. Aleksandr Tsipko, *Nauka i zhizn'*, nos. 11 and 12 (1988); nos. 1 and 2 (1989). Tsipko's article was reprinted in *Surovaia drama naroda* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1989), pp. 175-257; an abridged English translation can be found in *CDSP*, 41, nos. 10, 11, 12, 13 (1989).

good example of the limitations of the intelligentsia critique. Iurii Emelianov devoted an entire book to cutting Bukharin down to size. Assembling all the compromising material glossed over by admirers of Bukharin, Emelianov used Bukharin in order to condemn the Bolshevik leadership as a whole (with the exception of Lenin). The book combines a genuinely insightful discussion of the effects of civil war with the popular but dubious argument that Bukharin was in the grip of "Russophobia."[81]

At first this critique spared Lenin himself, but only at the cost of disassociating him completely from the rest of Bolshevism. The last articles are used as evidence that Lenin finally realized that progress was only possible through "development of the best models of tradition and the results of *existing* peasant culture."[82] But, alas, he was unheeded by the rest of the Bolshevik leadership; in fact, argues Kozhinov, Lenin was factually removed from power before his final collapse in 1923, since the rest of the leadership flouted all his wishes with impunity. Lenin's privileged status did not last, and nationalist critiques were soon more open in their total rejection of Bolshevism. As a result, the nationalist intellectuals did not see NEP as a real alternative to Stalinism – indeed (in the words of Apollon Kuzmin) "1929 was in no way a departure from the policies of the l920s, but their natural development."[83]

The nationalist anti-intelligentsia critique is not the only analysis to maintain that NEP was not a viable alternative to Stalinism. Igor Kliamkin, a writer who fully shares the values of the reformist intellectuals, has maintained that "NEP, called forth to replace war communism, created the conditions for its revival and secure establishment."[84] Kliamkin goes beyond the villainy of individual Bolshevik leaders and the illusions of socialist intellectuals to examine the sociological bases of Stalinism. One base was the newly-recruited industrial class, living in terrible conditions,

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81. Kozhinov, "Samaia bolshaia opasnost, *Nash sovremennik*, no. 1 (1989), pp. 141-75; Iu. V. Emelianov, *Zametki o Bukharine: revoliutsiia, istoriia, lichnost'* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1989). Emelianov pays Stephen Cohen the compliment of devoting an entire chapter to his influence in the Soviet Union.

82. Kseniia Mialo, "Oborvannaia nit: krestianskaia kultura and kulturnaia revoliutsiia,' *Novy mir*, no. 8 (1988), p. 249.

83. Kuzmin, "K kakomu khramu," p. 163; Fatei Shipunov, "Velikaia zamiatnia," *Nash Sovremennik*, no. 12 (1989), pp. 153-56. Shipunov manages to discuss collectivization without mentioning Stalin and putting all the focus on the Commissar of Agriculture, Ia. A. Iakovlev-Elshtein.

84. Igor Kliamkin, "Kakaia ulitsa vedet k khramu?," *Novyi mir*, no. 11 (1987), pp. 150-88; "Pochemu trudno govorit pravdu," *ibid.*, no. 2 (1989), pp. 204-38. Another important article that treats Stalinism as a tragic necessity is Boris Kurashvili, "Politicheskaia doktrina stalinizma," *Istoriia SSSR*, no. 5 (1989), pp. 60-77.

uprooted from one culture and not yet rooted in another, intolerant of a minority's right to disrupt social unity. Stalinism's sacrifice of the present for the sake of the future, its heady mixture of enthusiasm and repression, was more understandable to these workers than NEP's celebration of the market and private accumulation. NEP's roots in the countryside were also vulnerable. Neither a European market system nor a European political system could take root in a country with scattered pre-capitalist villages dominated by communal traditions. The imperatives of national independence in a peasant country destroyed NEP and made the institution of some kind of autocratic rule inevitable.

Kliamkin agrees with the liberal reformers that the only solution for the Soviet Union is the market system and the virtues of the Protestant work ethic, but he criticizes them for their moralistic search for villains, coupled with a lack of understanding of the complex cultural preconditions of a successful market system. In the past, Russian intellectuals allowed their love of genuinely admirable European ideals to blind them to the reality of their own society. This is why the liberals failed, the non-Bolshevik socialists failed, and finally why the Bolshevik Old Guard failed. To some, Kliamkin's analysis seems like blaming the victim. But can the Russian people really be blamed because history did not make them able to carry out European ideals? "Can we repent of the fact that we are what we are?"

Why was NEP the road not taken? This is the question that every reformer must address. The aim of the investigation into the defeat of NEP is not only to find out who is to blame, but even more importantly, to find out what is to be done. Even writers like Kozhinov and Kliamkin who reject the idea of an alternative in the past feel that the Soviet Union today is in an era of great choices. Under these circumstances, the failure of NEP may be the best available guide to the success of *perestroika*.

The Waning of NEP

By 1990 the NEP image had run out of steam. To be sure, NEP was still invoked by prominent reformers and scholarly interest in the NEP period remained high.[85] But the scope of the reform process had clearly

85. Two collections of articles by Soviet historians on previously forbidden topics are *Istoriki sporiat* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1988), and *Urok daet istoriia* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1989). Two book-length studies by Western scholars of the new debates in history are R. W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution* (Bloomington, IL: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1989), and Alec Nove, *Glasnost in Action: Cultural Renaissance in Russia* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989). Discussions of NEP could also be found in particular in the journal *Voprosy istorii KPSS*. In October 1989, I participated in a conference on the 1920s

moved beyond the point where NEP would play a central role either as a guide or as a legitimizing symbol.

At the beginning of *perestroika*, the challenge was to show that the market was compatible with socialism. By 1990, the challenge was to show that socialism was compatible with the market. The deepening economic crisis, the full-speed-ahead market reforms in Eastern Europe, and the Communist Party's growing inability to police the boundaries of political discourse – all of these factors contributed to making "*khozraschet* socialism" less full-bodied than the demand for a "normal" Western-style market economy, with all that this implied in terms of high productivity, the rule of law, and openness to the world. Cooperatives were now viewed as a stepping stone to private property:

According to Andrei Orlov, vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers' State Commission on Economic Reform ". . . private property's need to hide out under an assumed name (i.e., cooperative, family, or collective property) is nothing but a concession to people still not ready to accept it." Orlov said that this should dispel Western businessmen's skepticism and fear.[86]

NEP meant the toleration of the market on the road to socialism; if the reformers of *perestroika* were indeed on the same road, they were travelling in the opposite direction.

Another reason for the waning of NEP was the new political scope of the reform movement. The shift from party to state began in 1988 when Gorbachev announced plans at the 19th party conference for the creation of a new national legislature. In 1989 the national legislature became the focus of political attention; in 1990 the Communist Party renounced its *de jure* right to a political monopoly and at the same time revealed its *de facto* abdication of a leadership role in the reform process. These developments forced reformers to take another look at the 1920s as the period when opposition within and without the party was definitively outlawed. Articles in the reformist press began to stress other sides of Lenin's heritage, such as endorsement of monolithic party unity or his deportation of prominent representatives of the intelligentsia in 1922. An article in *Ar-*

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at the Institute of History in Moscow. This was one of the first conferences in which American and Soviets historians came together to discuss a problem of Soviet political history; papers from the conference will be published in *Slavic Review.*

86. Andrei Borodenkov, "Giving Private Property a Good Name," *Moscow News*, no. 27 (1990). For an early expression of doubts on the workability of "*khozraschet* socialism," see L. Popkova, "Gde pyshnee pirogi," *Novyi mir*, no. 5 (1987), pp. 239-41.

gumenty i fakty stated bluntly that "the foundations of the future Stalinist model of society were laid between 1922 and 1924."[87]

The shift in perspective can be seen by comparing two remarks by Len Karpinsky, a "half-dissident" who had rejoined the party after 1985. In an interview conducted sometime before April 1989, when he was still ready to defend the party, Karpinsky used the 1920s as an image of pluralism: "we had [then] the kind of diverse structures and pluralism toward which we are now striving." But by 1990 he was sufficiently disillusioned with the party to draw a different lesson: "In the 1920s the party kept at bay a multiparty system, freedom of speech and the press."[88] The reformers' new skepticism about the political implications of NEP had already been expressed by Fazil Iskander in 1988:

> The awful thing is that, remembering the Party arguments of the time, I somehow cannot remember one man who put forward a program for the democratization of the country. There were arguments about inter-party democracy but I don't remember any others. And we must recognize in this the spiritual guilt of all the revolutionary leaders of the time. What was this? Disdain for so-called bourgeois democracy . . . or fear of new competitors? I think it was both. In such conditions Stalin, naturally, proved to be the best Stalinist, and won.[89]

The waning of NEP coincided with a generational shift in the leadership of the reform movement. The original intelligentsia spokesmen for *perestroika* came from the generation variously called "the children of the Twentieth Congress" (when Khrushchev denounced Stalin in 1956) or "the people of the sixties." These were people who had committed themselves to the reforms of the Khrushchev era and saw *perestroika* as a continuation with better leadership and a better strategy. As the reform movement progressed and as new economic and political opportunities

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87. A. Podshchekoldin in *Argumenty i fakty*, no. 27, July 7, 1990, p. 2. For articles on Lenin, see Leonid Radzikhovsky, "Testament," *Moscow News*, no. 16 (1990); Tamara Krasovitskaya, "Waste Not, Want Not," *Moscow News*, no. 21 (1990). On the fate of opposition in the 1920, see Nikolai Gul'binskii, "Oppozitsiia," *Ogonek*, no. 13 (1990), pp. 6-11; Boris Belenkin, "Gan'ka," *Ogonek*, no. 21 (1990), pp. 18-21; Viacheslav Kostikov, "Vremia ottaiavshikh slov," *ibid.*, no. 22 (1989), pp. 4-7 (on the origins of censorship in the 1920s).

88. The first quote comes from Cohen and Vanden Heuvel, *Voices of Glasnost,* p. 302; the second quote comes from an article coauthored with Dmitri Kazutin in *Moscow News*, no. 27 (1990).

89. *Moscow News*, no. 28 (1988), p. 11.

opened up, it was inevitable that a new generation would come forward – a generation that had matured during the Brezhnev "stagnation era" and shared some of the characteristics of that era. Among these were an ahistorical dismissal of the past and a more and more open fascination with the Western world.[90]

It was hardly likely that members of this new generation would follow the example of Egor Yakovlev, the editor of the *Moscow News,* and actually study Lenin for inspiration. If they read Lenin, it was more probably because they were searching for incriminating quotations.[91] Insofar as his generation needed an intelligentsia spokesman, it would be someone like Aleksandr Tsipko, who simply dismissed the Bolsheviks along with the whole revolutionary intelligentsia as arrogant fanatics.[92] The relation between the two generations can be compared to the relation between the Old Bolsheviks who started the revolution and the vast mass of party members who signed up during the civil war. The older generation shared many assumptions with their opponents; their fiery polemics were partly aimed at convincing themselves. The younger generation that was recruited after the fighting had started was so distant from the heritage of the past that they were impatient with polemics when action was needed. Don't refute the *apparatchiki* – just get rid of them!

The great burst of historical interest had not died out completely, but it had moved back from the 1920s to the civil war and the revolution itself. Articles in the popular press became less interested in Bolshevik martyrs such as Bukharin and more interested in examining the historical alternatives to Bolshevism itself. Sympathetic articles appeared on the Mensheviks, the liberal Constitutional Democrats, the peasant-based Socialist Revolutionaries and the radical Left Socialist Revolutionaries that briefly shared power with the Bolsheviks.[93] More and more, the fatal misturning

90. A self-portrait of the older generation can be found in Cohen and Vanden Heuvel, *Voices of Glasnost*. A striking example of an ahistorical attitude is Boris Yeltsin's memoirs, where the reader of Yeltsin's life is hardly aware of what decade it is; see Yeltsin, *Against the Grain* (London: Cape, 1990).

91. Vladimir Soloukhin, "Chitaia Lenina" (Reading Lenin), *Rodina*, no. 10 (1989). For Egor Yakovlev, see Cohen and Vanden Heuvel, *Voices of Glasnost,* p. 221.

92. Besides the articles cited earlier, see Aleksandr Tsipko, "Awakening Russia," *Moscow News*, no. 26 (1990).

93. On the Mensheviks, see Viacheslav Kostikov, "Sled ot shliapy Iu. 0. [Martova]," *Ogonek*, no. 10 (1990), pp. 28-31; on the liberals, see Rem Petrov, "Miliukov, ili biografiia kompromissa," *Ogonek*, no. 14 (1990), pp. 18-21; on the SRs, see the interview with Ekaterina Tarasova, *Moscow News*, no. 12 (1990); for the Left SRs, see Vasilii Golovanov, "Levye esery: sorvannyi urok," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, July 4, 1990, p. 13. The Constituent

of Russian history was placed in 1917 rather than 1929. The official defense of the revolution was just that – a defense, rather than a celebration. This defense focused more on the tragic necessities of a time of troubles rather than on any spirited identification with Bolshevik values.[94]

The NEP alternative will be seen by historians as an important but ultimately transitory phase of the reform movement. This should not detract from its value, not only as a bridge from communism to a market economy, but as a set of political ideals with its own integrity. These ideals are expounded by the Bukharin character in Shatrov's play *Forward! Forward! Forward!*:

> [We stand] for a slow, decades-long process of growing into socialism through the systematic growth of industry, through cooperatives) through a thousand and one intermediary forms of cooperation, from the lowest to the highest. We stand for replacing the slogan "who beats whom" with "who is allied with whom?" – for overcoming difficulties principally with economic methods. We believe the economy should serve man, and not man the economy. We are for soviet law, and not soviet arbitrariness; [we want] a free and varied culture. We are for the political dictatorship of the party, but a party that does not forget [Lenin's words on the dangers of a party of obedient fools]. We want a sharp repulse to nationalism, both the crude anti-semitic kind as well as the most subtle – Ilyich demanded this as well. We stand for conscience – it does not (as some think) lose its validity in politics. We want it to be always remembered that just as dry water cannot exist, neither can inhumane socialism.[95]

The reformers' use of NEP shows how a real past can give rise to an ideal past which turns into an ideal future. Although the NEP ideal may not be the path that leads to the temple, it will be remembered for its service as the inspiration for the pioneers of *perestroika*.

Assembly dispersed by the Bolsheviks in 1918 became a rallying symbol; see Iurii Gavrilov, "Volia naroda?," *Ogonek*, no. 11 (1990), pp. 21-24.

94. See Gorbachev's speech in honor of Lenin's birthday in *Pravda,* April 21, 1990. Gorbachev seems to be following the line of argument set out by the historians G. Bordiugov, V. Kozlov, and V. Loginov; see their two articles in *Kommunist*, no. 14 (1989), pp. 74-87 and *ibid.*, no. 5 (1990), pp. 61-76.

95. *Znamia*, no. 1 (1988), pp. 40-41.